

The Garden of Abu Talhah

All perfect praise is due to Allaah; I testify that there is nothing worthy of worship except Allaah and that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger; may Allaah send salutations and exalt his mention, as well as that of his family and all his companions.

Anas ibn Maalik*, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated: *"When the verse:

لن تنالوا البر حتى تنفقوا مما تحبون

which means: *"Never will you attain the good reward [or righteousness] until you spend [in the way of Allaah] from that which you love" was revealed, Abu Talhah, may Allaah be pleased with him, went to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and said: 'O Messenger of Allaah! Allaah has revealed this, and the dearest of my wealth is Bayr-Haa', (which was a garden that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam liked to visit, sit in the shade of its trees and drink from its well) I am giving it up for the sake of Allaah and His Messenger hoping for its reward in the Hereafter, so use it in whichever way Allaah likes." Thereupon, the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said: "O Abu Talhah! Bakhin, Bakh, (an expression used to denote surprise and approval) this indeed is a profitable trade, your charity is accepted, and I see that you should give it to your relatives." So he, may Allaah be pleased with him, distributed it amongst his relatives."* Another narration of this story states: *"He gave it to his paternal relatives."* Two of these relatives were *Hassaan* and *Ubayy*, may Allaah be pleased with them both; *Hassaan*, may Allaah be pleased with him, sold his share to *Mu'aawiyah*, may Allaah be pleased with him, who later built on it the castle of *Banu Huthaylah.*

This narration was reported in the books of the great *Imaams Bukhaari* and *Muslim*, may Allaah have mercy upon them both, and it informs us of how the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, would respond to the *Qur'aan* and how their hearts would receive the revelation with belief and full submission, as well as their immediate practical implementation by acting in accordance with the implications of the revealed verses.

When this verse was revealed, the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, knew that this great rank of righteousness and its huge reward cannot be attained unless one

spends the dearest of what he possesses; it is mentioned in one of the narrations of this story that the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* recited the aforementioned verse whilst on the pulpit, and that *Abu Talhah*, may Allaah be pleased with him, immediately stood up as soon as he heard the verse - as soon as the words of his Lord were recited before him - he stood up without thinking for long or delaying his reaction; he stood up and offered the best of his wealth; he immediately spent it and then said words that reflected his sincerity, he said that the reason for him doing this was that he hoped for its reward with Allaah. After that, he gave authority to the most knowledgeable person to make use of it as he saw fit. Also, the great suggestion of the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* was so because spending on relatives acquires a double reward: it entails the reward of charity as well as the reward for maintaining good ties with kinsfolk.

***Ana*s, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: *"Abu Talhah was one of the richest people amongst the Ansaar (i.e., residents of Madeenah)."* In another narration, it is stated that his wealth consisted of palm trees, and he had other gardens, but this one which he gave in charity was the best of them all.**

The following are benefits derived from the narration:

- **The Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* used to go looking for fresh water, which is proof that seeking it is permissible. In one narration, *'Aa'ishah*, may Allaah be pleased with her, said: *"The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam used to get fresh water from an area that was a distance of two days' travel."* [*Abu Daawood*] Thus, seeking fresh water does not contradict asceticism, nor can it be considered as an exaggerated means of seeking worldly pleasures, because the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* was the most knowledgeable person regarding what pleases Allaah. Additionally, there is no virtue in drinking salty water, contrary to what some *Soofi* sects believe, thinking that drinking fresh water contradicts asceticism and that drinking salty water brings them closer to Allaah, whilst the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* sought fresh water and Allaah says:**

يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا تحرموا طيبات ما أحل الله لكم

which means: *"O you who have believed, do not prohibit the good things which Allaah has made lawful to you."* [*Al-Maa'idah*: 87] It is important to know that this verse was revealed regarding some people who wished to refrain from certain types of *Halaal* food. The *Soofis* claim that one gets closer to Allaah by depriving himself of certain foods, but this is not something that Allaah has legislated.

Now the question arises: where and how do people err regarding permissible pleasures and food? The answer to this is that the problem begins when people waste their time and money in obtaining such things in excess; it happens when people go to the other extreme and eat so much that they are unable to worship Allaah, and this is disliked, but there is nothing wrong with people eating and enjoying permissible matters within limits and without exaggeration.

- **No matter how inexpensive food is, or how little one eats, one will never be able to thank Allaah enough for it.**

- **It is permissible for one to enter a garden and drink from its water free of charge, if he knows that the owner will not mind him doing so, or if it is known that he normally forgives one who does so, even if the owner did not grant him prior permission, as the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* did likewise.**

- ***Abu Talhah*, may Allaah be pleased with him, gave the best of his wealth in charity and this is contrary to what some people do when they give the worst of what they have in Allaah's cause, as Allaah says:**

ولستم بآخذيه إلا أن تغمضوا فيه

which means: *"You would not take it [yourself] except with closed eyes…"* [*Al-Baqarah:* 267] Meaning, that the person who gives out such charity would never wish to accept the same from anyone else, unless he was in great need and distressed, so why do some people spend in charity that which they would refuse to receive?

For this reason, a sign of true belief is that one spends in charity from the best of what he possesses of food, drink and clothing. When some are encouraged to spend, they give away torn clothes and this does not reflect righteousness. Thus, only those who spend the best of what they have are those who reach this state of righteousness and will attain the promised fine reward. Some people give away clothes that they have never worn when they wish to give in charity, which is an excellent quality that reflects their response to the aforementioned verse, and it is an indication that their hearts are overwhelmed with faith.

When a person gives in charity, it is a hard struggle; the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* said: *"When one spends in charity, he does so after releasing (himself) from seventy devils."* Each one of these devils persists to encourage one to hold on to it, not wanting this wealth to be spent. So when one does spend, it is a great act of worship. That is why when *Abu Talhah*, may Allaah be pleased with him, reacted in the way he did, the Prophet

sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam **praised him by saying: *"Bakhin, Bakh"* which is a word used by the Arabs to express how remarkable and great something is.**

- **One must consult with the people of knowledge before distributing charity, because they are better acquainted about ways of spending that can result in a greater reward, or which way could be more beneficial to other Muslims. This is why *Abu Talhah*, may Allaah be pleased with him, did not dispense his charity but rather offered it to the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* to spend it any a way he saw fit. The Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* accepted it, but then returned it to him, instructing him to spend it on his relatives, because this way he would receive double the reward - one for charity and the other for keeping good ties with his kinfolk.**

- **It is lawful to spend more than a third of one's wealth whilst alive and healthy, because the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* did not ask *Abu Talhah*, may Allaah be pleased with him, whether this was a third or less or more than that of his total wealth, rather, he *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* accepted it immediately from him, which is an indication that one can spend as much of his wealth in charity, whilst he is alive, as he wishes - even if it is his entire wealth. Limiting it to a third should only be done if one is on his deathbed, or in one's will.**

- **One should give preference to his relatives when giving charity.**

- **It is permissible to own a garden. It is also permissible for scholars and other honourable people to enter such gardens to rest in or enjoy themselves, because enjoying lawful matters does not contradict being devout in any way. So, just as the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* would pray the optional night prayer until his feet cracked, he *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* would also go to this garden to enjoy its shade and water. The problem lies not in enjoying oneself, but in the excessive amount of time people spend in doing such things. On the other hand, this cannot be compared to taking one's family to amusement parks, which are usually sinful environments which involve many prohibitions such as intermixing between men and women.**

- **It is permissible to trade in real estate, as was done by *Abu Talha's* relative who sold his share of the garden.**

- **It is permissible to drink at a friend's house, even if he is not present, if one knows**

that the friend would not mind.

- **It is acceptable to announce the giving of one's charity, and the wealth announced as spent is no longer the property of the donor. If the donor makes the charity general, without specifying the beneficiary, then the person authorised to distribute it is free to spend it as he sees best, otherwise it must be spent as designated by the donor.**

- **It is permissible for the donor to distribute his donation personally.**

- **It is recommended to give charity money to righteous and trustworthy people for distribution.**

- **The garden was given out as charity and not as an endowment, otherwise *Hassaan*, may Allaah be pleased with him, could not have sold it later, because endowments cannot be sold, ever. In the case of an endowment, the item itself remains untouched and whatever revenue comes from it is distributed in the way specified by the owner, and this is the charity which the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam* was referring to when he said: *“When a servant (of Allaah) dies, his (good) deeds will cease, except for three (kinds of deeds): A charity with continuous effect, knowledge from which people draw benefit, and a good son who prays to Allaah for him.”* Due to the great virtue of endowments, almost all of the Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, who could afford an endowment, had one. An endowment may be designated for certain people, such as when the donor states that it should go to specific named people, or, it may remain general, such as when the donor states that it should go to any benevolent field.**

